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BLISTER RUST NEWS SERVICE

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Large Pines Become the Prey of the Blister Rust. Prompt Action
in Control Advisable.



Dr. Perley Spaulding, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, who studied blister rust conditions in Europe last year, has stated that "there is not the slightest doubt that the largest and oldest trees can be killed by the white-pine blister rust. The oldest white pine trees that I saw in Europe were in Switzerland. These were trees 118 years old with a diameter of 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 feet. These were killed or being killed by the blister rust. I doubt if larger white pine trees can be found in Europe, owing to the immense amount of large timber cut during the war. It is safe to say however, that the blister rust in Europe has killed the largest white pine trees that it has had a chance to attack, and there is not the slightest reason to expect that the much greater size of our western white pine and sugar pine in Idaho and California will protect them from the ravages of this disease."

The blister rust kills pines by girdling the bark, and thus preventing the flow of sap, which normally sustains life and promotes growth in the tree. After the bark is once penetrated the disease continues its growth until the tree dies. Small trees and limbs on large trees are killed within a few years, while a longer period of time is required for the rust to kill the big trees. During the past several years, many unprotected woodlots in the Northeastern States, containing young pines have suffered severe damage and in some cases half of the trees have been killed by the rust.

Recent reports show that the rust is also killing out merchantable pines in our oldest infected areas. The writer has recently seen an example of the destructive nature of the blister rust attack at Plymouth, Mass. One case was that of a medium-sized native white pine, easily seen from one of the main highways, which has suffered severely from the rust. In 1922, this tree was 37 feet in height, and 11 inches in diameter at breast height. Now it is only 12 feet in height, for it was girdled on the main trunk by the blister rust, and broken off at that height. The top lies on the ground nearby. Infection on this tree dates back to 1904 or 1905; a row of cultivated black currants nearby probably being responsible for the infection.

Within a mile of this first pine is a larger tree, 20 inches in diameter and 55 feet in height, which this spring showed a large canker, caused by the blister rust on the main trunk, at a height of 33 feet. The infection probably entered from a side branch. Now that the tree is infected in a vital point, its death is inevitable.

Large ornamental pines which are infected by the blister rust may be saved, if the disease has not progressed too far, by the removal of diseased branches or areas, but this necessitates very careful work to find all of the infections, and a regular follow-up for a number of years, to insure freedom from the disease. In the forest, however, the removal of diseased branches from large trees is seldom practicable, on account of the cost, and here we must rely on prevention of infection in order to keep the pines healthy. This can be accomplished by the removal of all currants and gooseberries within 600 to 900 feet of the trees. Where stands of merchantable pine have become infected, advice concerning their treatment should be secured from the County Blister Rust Agent, in care of the Farm Bureau, or from the State Forester.

